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Economic and Social Council

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E/CN.6/1997/L.1
28 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Forty-first session
10-21 March 1997
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Status of documentation for the session

Note by the Secretary-General

1. By Economic and Social Council resolutions 1979/1 and 1979/69 on the control and limitation of documentation and 1988/77 on the revitalization of the Council, the Council reiterated that the Secretariat should circulate the relevant documentation in all the working languages six weeks before the opening of the sessions of the Council and its subsidiary organs, and invited the Secretariat to take steps to ensure effective compliance with rule 13, paragraph 4, of the rules of procedure of the Council.

2. By resolution 1979/69, the Council requested the Secretariat to inform the Council and its subsidiary bodies, in the relevant annotated agenda, which documents had not been issued in accordance with the six-week rule, with a full explanation of the reasons that prevented their circulation.

3. In view of the schedule of the forty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (10-21 March 1997), the documentation for the session should have been submitted to the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs by 13 January and circulated by 27 January 1997. The documents not circulated by that date are listed in the annex below.

* E/CN.6/1997/1.

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Annex

STATUS OF DOCUMENTATION AS AT 28 FEBRUARY 1997

Agenda item	Document	Date of submission to the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs	Date of submission to the Office of Conference Services	Actual or projected date of issue
3 (d)	Report of the Secretary-General on progress achieved in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and in mainstreaming a gender perspective within the United Nations system (E/CN.6/1997/2)	27 January 1997	10 February 1997	5 March 1997
3 (c)	Report of the Secretary-General on thematic issues before the Commission (E/CN.6/1997/3)	31 January 1997	20 February 1997	5 March 1997
5	Report of the Secretary-General on a comparative summary of existing communications and inquiry procedures and practices under international human rights instruments and under the Charter of the United Nations (E/CN.6/1997/4)	18 December 1996	21 January 1997	4 March 1997

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Agenda item	Document	Date of submission to the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs	Date of submission to the Office of Conference Services	Actual or projected date of issue[a]
5	Report of the Secretary-General containing additional views of Governments, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations on an optional protocol to the Convention (E/CN.6/1997/5)	10 January 1997	19 February 1997	4 March 1997
3 (a)	Note by the Secretary-General on agreed conclusions 1996/1 adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its 1996 coordination segment on coordination of the United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (E/CN.6/1997/6)	10 January 1997	6 February 1997	Issued
3 (a)	Report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (E/CN.6/1997/7)	25 February 1997	27 February 1997	

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Agenda item	Document	Date of submission to the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs	Date of submission to the Office of Conference Services	Actual or projected date of issue[a]
3 (a)	Note by the Secretary-General transmitting information provided by the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/166 (E/CN.6/1997/8)	26 February 1997	28 February 1997	
3 (a)	Note by the Secretary-General on results of the sixteenth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (E/CN.6/1997/CRP.1)	14 February 1997	19 February 1997	4 March 1997
3 (a)	Note by the Secretary-General on the proposed programme of work of the Division for the Advancement of Women for the biennium 1998-1999 (E/CN.6/1997/CRP.2)	14 February 1997	19 February 1997	4 March 1997

[a] The date of issue can be indicated only for those documents which have reached the Office of Conference Services for processing.

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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Forty-first session
10-21 March 1997
Agenda item 7

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS FORTY-FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Sweeya SANTIPITAKS (Thailand)

Chapter ___

ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening and duration of the session

1. The Commission on the Status of Women held its forty-first session at United Nations Headquarters from 10 to 21 March 1997. The Commission held ____ meetings (1st to ____). In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1996/240, the Open-ended Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women also met.

2. The session was opened by the Chairperson.

3. At its 1st meeting, on 10 March, the Commission held a special ceremony to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Commission and heard an address by the Secretary-General.

4. Statements were made by the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women.

5. Statements were also made by the Chairperson and by the honoured guests.

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B. Attendance

6. The session was attended by representatives of ____ States members of the Commission. Observers for other States Members of the United Nations and for non-member States, representatives of organizations of the United Nations system and observers for intergovernmental, non-governmental and other organizations also attended. A list of participants is contained in annex ____ to the present report.

C. Election of officers

7. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/21, the officers elected to the Bureau of the Commission at its fortieth session would serve as officers during the forty-first session. At its 1st meeting, on 10 March, having been informed that Rafika Khouini (Tunisia) and Karin Stoltenberg (Norway) would be unable to continue to serve as Vice-Chairpersons, the Commission elected two new Vice-Chairpersons. The Bureau, therefore, comprised:

Chairperson: Sharon Brennen-Haylock (Bahamas)

Vice-Chairpersons: Ljudmila Boskova (Bulgaria)
Zakia Amara Bouazia (Tunisia)
Eva Hildrum (Norway)

Rapporteur: Sweeya Santipitaks (Thailand)

D. Agenda and organization of work

8. At its 1st meeting, on 10 March, the Commission adopted its provisional agenda and approved its organization of work, as contained in document E/CN.6/1997/1. The agenda read as follows:

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women:

   (a) Review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system;

   (b) Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men;

   (c) Implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern.

4. Communications concerning the status of women.

5. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, including the elaboration of a draft optional protocol to the Convention.

6. Provisional agenda for the forty-second session of the Commission.

7. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its forty-first session.

9. Also at its 1st meeting, the Commission was informed that Aloisia Woergetter (Austria) would continue to serve as Chairperson of the Open-ended Working Group on the Elaboration of a Draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, established in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/29.

E. Appointment of the members of a working group on communications on the status of women

10. The Commission established a working group to consider, under agenda item 4, communications concerning the status of women, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1983/27. The following five members, nominated by their regional groups, were appointed:

Lily Boeykens (Belgium)
Ana Peña (Peru)
Seyed Hossein Rezvani (Islamic Republic of Iran)
Nonhlanhla Pamela Tsabedze (Swaziland)
Zuzana Vranová (Slovakia)

F. Consultations with non-governmental organizations

11. A written statement, submitted by a non-governmental organization in accordance with rule 76 of the rules of procedure of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council (E/5975/Rev.1), was circulated in document E/CN.6/1997/NGO/1.

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COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Forty-first session
10-21 March 1997
Agenda item 7

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS FORTY-FIRST SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Sweeya SANTIPITAKS (Thailand)

Chapter ___

Moderator's summary of the panel discussion and dialogue on women and the environment

1. The Beijing Platform for Action[1] underlined that "sustainable development will be an elusive goal unless women's contribution to environmental management is recognized and supported". It called upon Governments and all other actors to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes and to ensure the necessary political and economic empowerment of women to enable them to participate fully along with men in environmental protection and conservation of natural resources.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes for sustainable development and in the implementation of Agenda 21

2. A holistic approach to sustainable development was crucial. Sustainable development could not be achieved without solving environmental problems, and environmental problems needed to be dealt with in the context of wider issues of human rights, gender and social equality, fair distribution of resources, and empowerment of people.

3. Agreements reached at the recent United Nations conferences and summits represented an evolving understanding of the links between gender, environment, population, and economic and social development. A cross-sectoral approach was

critical for addressing crucial interrelationships for achieving sustainable development. A further challenge was to infuse the development agenda with a human rights perspective.

4. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had represented a breakthrough in environmental awareness, including the drawing of attention to the important role women play in sustainable development. The subject of the inclusion of women as a major group in Agenda 21[2] needed, however, to be revisited in light of subsequent international agreements. The concept of women as a special group had been rejected at Vienna, Cairo and Beijing in favour of mainstreaming a gender perspective into all aspects of development. The series of global United Nations conferences following the Rio Conference had reflected this important shift away from women as a special group to women as key actors in all sectors of sustainable development.

5. The special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21 should take the results of other conferences fully into account and should employ a gender perspective in assessing the implementation in all sectors.

6. The importance of integrating a gender perspective in all policies and programmes was emphasized, including creating awareness of the impact of various policy measures and programmes for sustainable development on women as well as men.

7. The focus on women's empowerment and participation in decision-making for sustainable development should not divert attention from the importance of shared responsibility of both women and men, and the inclusion of women in decision-making should not be seen as a sufficient response to the need for mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes.

8. The importance of capacity-building, both internationally and nationally, for gender mainstreaming in sustainable development was noted. In this connection, training and advocacy campaigns were cited as effective tools for improving both gender and environmental awareness. Gender sensitivity training should be introduced across all the agencies working in planning for sustainable development.

9. Legislation at the national level should be brought into conformity with international commitments and treaty obligations, including, for example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.[3]

10. Resources for gender mainstreaming were too often taken from the limited funds available to women's ministries or offices. Part of mainstreaming would be to ensure that resources for bringing women into sustainable development were allocated from the budgets of other sectors and to ensure that these resources helped to integrate women-targeted projects into wider efforts for sustainable development.

Women's participation in decision-making for sustainable development

11. The relationship between women and the environment should be considered in light of the shift in focus from women as either victims or preservers of the environment, to empowerment of women both economically and politically. In view of the fact that women are not a homogeneous group, such factors as age, socio-economic status and race should also be taken into account.

12. The participation of civil society, women and men had proved to be essential for sustainable development. The reliance on top-down structures and decision-making and the creation of mega-structures often prevented participation by local communities and other actors in civil society in averting negative environmental impacts. Notwithstanding the cautioning that merely increasing the number of women in decision-making had not necessarily led to gender mainstreaming and better policies for sustainable development, evidence was noted that the participation of women and women's groups at the community level had a positive impact. The creation of a critical mass of women decision makers had proved to be an effective strategy for bringing about change in organizational cultures and policies. Structures and approaches that promoted efficient cooperation between the public and private sectors and between women and men in partnership had also been successful.

13. One of the ways to increase women's participation in decision-making for sustainable development was to provide women with access to education and training in science and technology.

14. The importance of alliance-building and networking among those women who were in decision-making positions was underlined.

15. Women at the local level often have specialized knowledge, traditions and interests that make them efficient managers of natural resources. However, this did not automatically put them in position to take critical decisions, given their often subordinate position in the household and the community. Their input into decisions on community resource management needed to be ensured through formal arrangements. Particular attention should be given to women in the agricultural sector where access to training, land and productive resources would facilitate their participation in decision-making for sustainable development.

Assessing the relationship between women and the environment and the impact of environmental factors on women

16. In identifying or developing technological solutions for environmental problems, it was considered essential to ensure that those solutions reflected the needs and interests of both men and women and that they were compatible with indigenous knowledge and local realities. Technologies that were inexpensive, easy to install and to operate, and consistent with the needs of communities, including women, had been highly successful. Solar energy was an example of a technology in whose development women could play a pioneering role. Transfer of technology should promote capacity-building for both women and men and include training for both groups.

17. It was suggested that all development policies and programmes should include a gender impact assessment along with an environmental impact assessment. It was considered important to assess in a gender-sensitive way the impact of globalization processes, privatization and liberalization of trade, industrialization, and export-oriented production in relation to environmental concerns. The impact of international and regional trade agreements on women should be examined as well.

18. The pressing need for research on the impact of environmental degradation on women's health, including breast cancer and other cancers in females was pointed out.

19. Information on technologies and pollutants should be made widely available, especially to women, so as to assist in the prevention of environmental damage.

20. The economic recovery and structural adjustment programmes of the last decade had necessitated the removal of subsidies on some products, like liquefied petroleum gas, with definite links to environmental degradation. Concern was expressed about the export of banned pesticides from developed to developing countries and the environmental impact on women and men.

21. The lack of gender-disaggregated data, indicators (both qualitative and quantitative) and research on gender impacts of environmental policies and programmes was noted. Efforts were needed to collect and improve data disaggregated by sex so as to better understand the impact of environmental policies and programmes on women. The lack of such data should not, however, be used as a reason to postpone mainstreaming of a gender perspective into policies and programmes at all levels.

22. The significant link between water resources and agriculture, forestry, and urban development was emphasized. The decline of water quality and the increased demand for clean water were noted. Local communities, especially women, should be given a more prominent role in water resource planning, development and management.

Notes

[1] Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[2] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

[3] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.